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Letter dated 23 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention a statement issued on 17 July 2001 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the European Union concerning President Putin's statement supporting the abolition of the death penalty in the Russian Federation (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Jean **De Ruyt**
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to the United Nations

* A/56/150.

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Annex to the letter dated 23 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Statement concerning President Putin's statement supporting the abolition of the death penalty in the Russian Federation issued on 17 July 2001 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the European Union

The European Union welcomes the comments made on 9 July 2001 by President Putin opposing the re-establishment of the death penalty in the Russian Federation.

The European Union calls upon the Russian Federation to abolish the death penalty both de facto and de jure and to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights as soon as possible.

The European Union repeats its opposition to the death penalty, and reaffirms that it considers that the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive development of human rights.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus and Malta and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 11 of its resolution 54/248 B, the General Assembly decided to include all necessary resources in the budget for the biennium 2000-2001 to provide interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States upon request by those groupings, on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, through the Committee on Conferences, a report on the implementation of that decision. The Committee fulfilled its reporting requirement through its annual report to the Assembly. A report on the item (A/55/182) was issued in accordance with paragraph 11 of the above resolution.

2. Furthermore, in paragraph 4 of section II of its resolution 55/222, the General Assembly reiterated the decision and request for the ensuing biennium.

3. The present report, submitted pursuant to the above-mentioned requests, contains statistics of meetings of regional and other major groupings held from the beginning of July 2000 to the end of June 2001, including a breakdown by regional group.

4. The General Assembly has mandated the Secretariat to make provision in its requests for resources for the servicing of such groups, while at the same time maintaining its decision that services should be provided on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice, that is, without any servicing capacity being specifically allocated for that purpose.

5. The manner in which the Secretariat has addressed these mandates has derived from the actual practice of calendar bodies. Every biennium, several hundred meetings are planned for in its capacity requirements and eventually scheduled. Cancellations of calendar body meetings reduce the number of meetings actually held, thus freeing capacity to service regional and other major groupings.

II. Data

6. With regard to New York, for the period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001, 100 per cent of the 863 requests for facilities alone were met. The need for groups to meet outside traditional working hours continued. As to provision of interpretation services, out of 275 requests, 249 were met, or a total of 91 per cent. At peak periods, some meetings were scheduled and provided with services outside regular working hours, especially after 6 p.m.

7. With respect to Geneva, for the same period 100 per cent of the 43 requests for interpretation and 1 request for facilities were met. At Vienna, 100 per cent of the 449 requests for facilities only were met. In Nairobi, 100 per cent of 152 requests for facilities were met (for the breakdown by groupings, see the table in paragraph 9 below).

8. The main difficulty in providing services during this 12-month period continued, as in previous years, to be: (a) an increase in the number of scheduled meetings over previous years, including heavy activity related specifically to the Millennium Summit in September 2000 and prior to and in preparation for three special sessions of the General Assembly; (b) an ongoing tendency towards lengthier meetings of the Security Council, additional and sometimes parallel

meetings of its working groups alone (101, over the reporting period, separate and apart from other Security Council meetings). The latter, of course, is very difficult to predict.

9. The table below contains statistics for the four duty stations.

	Interpretation services			*Conference facilities*	
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Requested*	*Provided*
Breakdown by grouping, July 2000-June 2001, New York					
Group of 77	84	76	8	556	556
Non-Aligned Movement	8	6	2	36	36
African Group	60	56	4	56	56
Asian Group	12	11	1	5	5
Latin American and Caribbean Group	16	14	2	10	10
Western European and Other States Group	16	16	0	6	6
Arab Group	1	1	-	83	83
Alliance of Small Island States	-	-	-	-	-
Association of Caribbean States	-	-	-	-	-
Association of South-East Asian Nations	1	1	-	2	2
Caribbean Community	-	-	-	2	2
Commonwealth States	-	-	-	-	-
Eastern European Group	-	-	-	13	13
Economic Community of West African States	13	12	1	6	6
European Community	1	-	-	-	-
Central American Group	-	-	-	2	2
Islamic Group (OIC)	24	23	1	17	17
Joint Coordinating Committee of Group of 77 and Movement of Non-Aligned Countries	5	5	0	1	1
JUSCANZ (Japan, United States, Canada and New Zealand)	0	0	0	36	36
Landlocked Countries	5	4	1	7	7
Least Developed Countries	23	17	6	14	14
Rio Group	7	7	-	9	9
Southern African Development Community	-	-	-	2	2
South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation	-	-	-	-	-
South Pacific Forum	-	-	-	-	-
Subtotal	**275**	**249**	**26**	**863**	**863**

	Interpretation services			*Conference facilities*	
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Requested*	*Provided*
Breakdown by grouping, July 2000-June 2001, Geneva					
Group of 77	14	14	-	-	-
African Group	7	7	-	1	1
Eastern European Group	2	2	-	-	-
Asian Group	-	-	-	-	-
Latin American and Caribbean Group	19	19	-	-	-
Islamic Group (OIC)	1	1	-	-	-
Subtotal	**43**	**43**	**-**	**1**	**1**
Breakdown by grouping, July 2000-June 2001, Vienna					
African Group	-	-	-	64	64
Asian Group	-	-	-	17	17
States from List D (Eastern EU)	-	-	-	8	8
Eastern European	-	-	-	121	121
Group of 77	-	-	-	48	48
Latin American and Caribbean Group	-	-	-	75	75
Western Europe and Other States	-	-	-	19	19
Andean Group	-	-	-	1	1
Arab Group	-	-	-	6	6
ASEAN Group	-	-	-	31	31
G-8 Group	-	-	-	46	46
Other regional groups	-	-	-	13	13
Subtotal	**-**	**-**	**-**	**449**	**449**
Breakdown by grouping, July 2000-June 2001, Nairobi					
Group of 77 and China	-	-	-	21	21
European Union Coordination Group	-	-	-	28	28
Eastern European Group	-	-	-	1	1
JUSCANZ (Japan, United States, Canada and New Zealand)	-	-	-	8	8
Western European and Other States Group	-	-	-	19	19
European Commission	-	-	-	1	1
African Group	-	-	-	16	16
Arab Group	-	-	-	16	16
Latin American and Caribbean Group	-	-	-	16	16

	Interpretation services			*Conference facilities*	
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Requested*	*Provided*
Central and Eastern European Group	-	-	-	16	16
Asian Group	-	-	-	10	10
Subtotal				**152**	**152**
Grand total					
July 2000-June 2001	**318**	**292**	**26**	**1 465**	**1 465**
July 1999-June 2000	**321**	**269**	**52**	**1 194**	**1 194**
July 1998-June 1999	**314**	**262**	**52**	**909**	**909**

10. In order to provide services and facilities whenever possible to regional and other major groupings, the responsible sections of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services at each duty station continued to work closely with the secretaries/organizers of calendar or other meetings with confirmed services so as to have adequate notice of cancellations or other instances where services might not be needed for the full three-hour block. By providing this information ahead of time, more regional groups, which often meet for less than three hours, were able to receive the services they needed. Coordinating this information with the regional groups is the key to providing interpretation when conference services are so stretched.

11. As indicated in paragraph 8 above, there was an increase in the percentage of meetings provided with interpretation despite the volume of scheduled and other intergovernmental meetings in 2001. A significant factor in providing facilities to meetings was the relative shortage of meeting rooms in the most recent reporting period, especially related to the upkeep of and repairs to the General Assembly Hall and other meeting rooms. In addition, most regional groups do not wish to meet outside traditional meeting hours.

III. Conclusion

12. The percentage of meetings held by regional and other major groupings that were provided with interpretation for the period recorded here has risen steadily from 84 per cent during the period 1998-1999 to 90 per cent for the current period for New York, that is, July 2000 to June 2001. Overall, for all four duty stations, 92 per cent of the requests for interpretation was met. It should be recalled that, in accordance with paragraph 8 of section II of resolution 55/222, intergovernmental bodies should bear in mind the servicing needs of related regional and other major groupings before requesting cancellation of assigned resources.